

# Savvy Saving Seniors™

## Steps to Avoiding Scams



In Partnership with:



# WELCOME!

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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING



# How Much Do You Know About Scams & Swindles?



### ICEBREAKER

Take the quiz in your handbook to see how you stand against scams.



## Objectives

- How Much Do You Know About Scams?
- Why You're at Risk for Financial Scams
- The Usual Suspects & Types of Scams
- Protecting Yourself & Loved Ones from Scams
- Resources to Report Scams & Financial Abuse



## Scams & You

- **1 in 5** individuals in the U.S. is aged 60+.
- **1 in 13** older persons will be abused, neglected, and/or financially exploited.
- **Only 1 in 44** elder financial abuse cases is ever reported to law enforcement.
- **9%** of financial abuse victims must turn to Medicaid after their own funds are stolen.



# Why Scammers Target Seniors

- Fears
- Frailties of Aging
- Dependence on Others
- Isolation





## Mommy Dearest Case Study:

Mrs. T's adult son Tom can't keep a job and struggles with a drinking problem. He moved in with Mrs. T "until he gets back on his feet." Mrs. T soon noticed that blank checks were missing from her checkbook, and she saw large ATM withdrawals listed on her bank statement. When she questioned Tom, he said he was just "borrowing" the money until he found a job. He told his mother that she owed it to him to help.

*What should she do?*

## It Could Happen to Anyone



## Initial Action Steps to Help

Mrs. T's money is hers, not her son's.

- She could help Tom find another place to live and ask for help from other family members and friends.
- She should also notify her bank that Tom is not authorized to access her accounts. She could close her account and open a new account number. Or she could stop using paper checks and arrange for automatic bill payment and use a debit card for purchases.
- She should call the police.



## The Usual Suspects: Who Are The Likely Perpetrators?

- **Strangers** preying on older people who may be isolated, lonely, confused, or desperate for attention.
- **Family members** to whom the person wants to stay connected.
- **Caregivers** (family and other) who use fear or guilt to take advantage of a senior.





# Types of Scams

New scams are created every day!  
The best way to defend yourself is  
to be aware of the tactics that  
scammers use.





# Top 10 Scams Targeting Seniors

1. Health Care/Medicare/  
Health Insurance Fraud
2. Counterfeit Prescription  
Drugs
3. Funeral & Cemetery  
Scams
4. Fraudulent Anti-Aging  
Products
5. Telemarketing
6. Internet Fraud
7. Investment Schemes
8. Homeowner/  
Reverse Mortgage Scams
9. Sweepstakes & Lottery Scams
10. The Grandparent Scam

Federal Bureau of Investigation's Task Forces on Seniors  
[www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/fraud/seniors](http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/fraud/seniors)

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## Tips for Avoiding Scams & Swindles





## Tips for Avoiding Health Insurance Fraud

- Never sign blank insurance claim forms.
- Never give blanket authorization to a medical provider to bill for services rendered.
- Ask your medical providers what they will charge and what you will be expected to pay out-of-pocket.
- Carefully review your insurer's explanation of the benefits statement. Call your insurer and provider if you have questions.
- Do not do business with door-to-door or telephone salespeople who tell you that services of medical equipment are free.
- Give your insurance/Medicare identification only to those who provide you with medical services.
- Keep accurate records of all health care appointments.
- Know if your physician ordered equipment for you.



## Tips for Avoiding Medicare Scams

- Misuse of Medicare dollars is one of the largest scams involving seniors. Common schemes include billing for services never delivered and selling unneeded devices or services to beneficiaries.
- To prevent Medicare scams:
  - Protect your Medicare number as you do your credit card numbers and do not allow anyone else to use it.
  - Be wary of salespeople trying to sell you something they claim will be paid for by Medicare.
  - Review your Medicare statements to be sure you have in fact received the services billed.
  - Report suspicious activities to **1-800-MEDICARE**.
  - Contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol program [www.smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org)





### 5 Tips for Avoiding Telemarketing Scams

1. Don't buy from an unfamiliar company.
2. Always ask for and wait until you receive written material about any offer or charity.
3. Obtain a salesperson's name, business identity, telephone number, street address, mailing address, and business license number before you transact business.
4. Always take your time in making a decision.
5. If you have information about a fraud, report it to state, local, or federal law enforcement agencies.





## Work At Home Scams

- Be aware of classified ads or online job posting to work at home. Such jobs include: Secret Shopper
- Always verify if a company is legitimate
- Check the Better Business Bureau  
[www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)



## Tips for Avoiding Home Repair or Contractor Fraud

- Be an informed consumer. Take the time to call and shop around before making a purchase. Take a friend with you who may offer some perspective to help you make difficult decisions.
- Get the contractors state license information and number
- Carefully read all contracts and purchasing agreements before signing and make certain that all of your requirements have been put in writing.
- Make sure you understand all contract cancellation and refund terms.
- As a general rule governing all of your interactions as a consumer, do not allow yourself to be pressured into making purchases, signing contracts, or committing funds. These decisions are yours and yours alone.



## Money Drain Case Study:

Mrs. B is an 87-year-old woman living in her own home. A serious leak develops in her kitchen pipes. She hires a plumber, who runs up the bills, always telling her more work is needed. When she doesn't pay the inflated bills—nearly \$20,000—she starts getting threatening phone calls and visits demanding the money. She isolates herself out of fear. Mrs. B should:

1. Check the plumber's references and report him/her to the Better Business Bureau.
2. Report the threats to the police.
3. File a complaint with the Consumer Protection Bureau and Federal Trade Commission.
4. Call on family and friends for help and support.
5. All of the above.





# Protecting Yourself & Your Loved Ones







## Protecting Your Identity

- **Identity Theft:**
  - Without your consent, someone using your personal information (Social Security, credit card, or driver's license number) to access your accounts, open up new accounts, or apply for loans or mortgages is a crime.
- **Medical Identity Theft**
  - Without your consent, someone using your personal and health insurance information to get medical treatment, prescription drugs, or surgery.



# Common Ways to Steal Identity

- **“Shoulder surfing”**
  - Someone looking over your shoulder as you fill out forms or use your PIN at an ATM or listening to you give your credit card number over the phone.
- **“Dumpster diving”**
  - Someone going through garbage for copies of your checks and credit card or bank statements or for preapproved credit cards mailings in order to activate the cards.
- **Phishing scams**
  - Emails that appear to be from a legitimate company or institution (like the IRS), asking you to “update” or “verify” your personal information.



# Ways to Protect Your Identity

- **Invest in—and use—a paper shredder.**
- **Monitor your bank and credit card statements.**
- **Stamp out identity theft with a ID Guard Stamp**
- **Do not fall for phishing scams.**
  - When in doubt, call the institution the email claims to come from or research the potential scam online.
- **Beware of telephone scams.**
  - Never give out personal information over the phone to someone who initiates the contact with you.
- **Be careful with your mail.**
  - Do not let incoming mail sit in your mailbox for a long time. When sending out sensitive mail, consider dropping it off at a secure collection box or directly at the post office.



## If You Suspect You're a Victim of Identity Theft

- Contact your bank(s) and credit card companies **immediately**.
- File a report with the police. The police may not be able to do very much themselves, but you may need a police report in order to clear up the problem.
- File with the Federal Trade Commission by using its online complaint form at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call the theft hotline at **1-877-ID-Theft**.
- Put out a fraud alert to the credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax, and Transunion).





## Top 8 Ways to Protect Yourself

1. Be aware that you're at risk from strangers—and from those closest to you .
2. Do not isolate yourself—stay involved!
3. Always tell solicitors: "I never buy from (or give to) anyone who calls or visits me unannounced. Send me something in writing."
4. Shred all receipts with your credit card number.
5. Sign up for the "Do Not Call" list (1-888-382-1222) and take yourself off multiple mailing lists.
6. Use direct deposit for benefit checks.
7. Never give your credit card, banking, Social Security, Medicare ,or other personal information over the phone unless you initiated the call.
8. Be skeptical of all unsolicited offers.

**What's your tip?**





# Protect Your Loved Ones: Signs to Look For

- Unusual recent changes in a person's accounts, including atypical withdrawals, new person(s) added, or sudden use of senior's ATM or credit card.
- Person suddenly appears confused, unkempt, and afraid.
- Utility, rent, mortgage, medical, or other essential bills are unpaid despite adequate income.
- Caregiver will not allow others access to the senior.
- Piled up sweepstakes mailings, magazine subscriptions, or "free gifts," which means they may be on "sucker lists."



## Next Steps for Victims of Financial Fraud

- Don't be afraid or embarrassed to talk about it—waiting could only make it worse.
- Immediately:
  - Call your bank and/or credit card company.
  - Cancel any debit or credit cards linked to the stolen account.
  - Reset your personal identification number(s).
  - Call Police and file a report
- Contact legal services and Adult Protective Services. To find your local offices, call the EldercareLocator toll free at **1-800-677-1116** weekdays 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Get to know your banker and build a relationship with the people who handle your finances. They can look out for any suspicious activity related to your account.



## Sample Resources

[www.AnnualCreditReport.com](http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com)

Regularly monitor your credit ratings and check on any unusual or incorrect information.

[www.Onguardonline.gov](http://www.Onguardonline.gov)

Get tips on protecting yourself from fraud. This site has interactive games to help you be a smarter consumer on issues of related to spyware, lottery scams, etc.

[www.Donotcall.gov](http://www.Donotcall.gov) (1-888-382-1222)

Register your phone number to stop solicitation calls except from political and charitable organizations.

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**Protect yourself and your loved ones from scams, schemes, and swindles by:**

- Being aware
- Being careful
- Doing your homework
- Asking for help if you are a victim

**In Conclusion: Be a Savvy Senior!**



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# Thank You!



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## For More Information

Company

Contact Name

Address

Phone

Fax

Email

Web address

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